



Nevada Division of Forestry Western Region 2008 Fire Management Report



Forest, Range, Watershed Protection

Natural Disasters

NDF assisted with two natural disasters. In January, a levee failed, during heavy rains, flooding hundreds of homes in Fernley. NDF responded hand crews from the Silver Springs Conservation Camp to assist with the recovery efforts. Then in February, a magnitude 6.0 earthquake hit the City of Wells, causing extensive damage. NDF responded with engines, hand crews, command staff and a mobile field kitchen to assist in relief and recovery efforts.



Fire Season

While spring precipitation was below normal, the onset of fire season was delayed due to cooler weather in May and the later snow melt in the mountains. During the summer there was less lightning and critical fire weather. As a result, Nevada experienced a mild fire season with only 460 fires and 72,012 acres burned statewide. The slower fire season allowed NDF to send fire engines, hand crews, helicopters and command staff to major fires in Oregon and California. In past years both states have provided aid to Nevada during busy fire seasons. In western Nevada, NDF responded to 58 fires.

Fire Preparedness

Air Operations – With funding provided from the last legislative session, a third helicopter was rebuilt from the ground up, and is now in service. A new helicopter fuel tender was also placed in service.



Fire Engines and Crews - Locally, NDF had four type 3 engines, three type 6 engines and three water tenders in service, along with five hand crews. Two of the type 6 engines, each with 150 gallons of water, are new additions and are used to provide quick initial attack of wildfires. A number of seasonal firefighters successfully advanced training and task books in order to be certified as engine operators and engine bosses.



Fire Prevention

Defensible Space Inspections - Engine crews continued going house to house, in high risk neighborhoods, to provide homeowners with information on defensible space, fire resistant

construction, and fire resistant landscaping. This ongoing program is to encourage homeowners to take responsibility and reduce the fire threat around their homes.

Fire Safety Education – Firefighters brought Smokey Bear to 17 fire safety programs. The estimated 15,000 people who attended these programs, learned about wildland fire safety. Several of these programs were an outreach to the local Hispanic community.



Fuels and Vegetation Management

Engine crews and hand crews continued thinning trees and removing excessive ground fuels, to reduce the chance of catastrophic fires and improve forest health in the Western Region.

Carson City – Cleared dead grass and brush on a three acre fuel break adjacent to Wellington subdivision, and shuttled water to support the sheep grazing cheatgrass reduction program, on the western foothills and Goni Canyon.

Dayton State Park – Thinned dead decadent brush and burned brush piles on 20 acres.

Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park (East Side) – To date a 10.2 mile long, shaded fuel break has been constructed. The fuel break, starts above Ash Canyon and runs along the Hobart road, and is 400 feet wide. In addition, work began to clear 70 acres of dead fall. Dead fall and woody biomass in the area averages 40 tons per acre.



Lockwood – Conducted a prescribed burn on five acres of county land adjacent to Rainbow Bend. Additional areas between houses were cleared by hand. Assisted the Nature Conservancy with a 20 acre prescribed burn on the McCarran Ranch.

Spooner Summit – Thinned trees, restored aspen stands and burned brush piles on 92 acres of state and private lands.

Virginia City Highlands – Removed almost two hundred dead pinyon trees on 10 residential lots, totaling 68 acres. Also, burned brush piles at the community drop off point by the fire station



Waterfall Rehabilitation – Continued contour felling of dead trees to help control erosion. During the spring planted 7,500 Jeffery pine seedlings in Ash Canyon.

Fire Protection Officer (FPO)- Assisted private landowners, fire safe councils, Carson City Open Space, state parks and fire districts with a multitude of fuels management projects by providing technical forestry assistance, cultural clearances, tree marking, fuel surveys and grant funding. The FPO also participated in a ten-year, multi-jurisdictional, planning effort for fuels reduction and wildfire prevention for the Carson Range.

Conservation Camp Crews – Under the direction of professional foresters, crews thinned 37 acres of lodgepole pine, burned over 1,000 slash piles and cut a fuel break along the main road in UNR's Whittle Forest. Crews also thinned and brushed 45 acres of private land in Washoe Valley and 142 acres in the Lake Tahoe basin.



Conclusion

Climate change is resulting in shorter winter and earlier spring snow melts, which has increased the probability of longer and more active fire seasons. Long term drought, invasive plant species, and insect killed trees are resulting in more intense and dangerous wildfires. Meanwhile, population growth and development continues in fire prone areas. With these challenges, the need for fuels management, fire rehabilitation, public safety education, fire prevention and interagency cooperation is of the utmost importance.

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